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A PLAIN and FAITHFUL

NARRATIVE

OF THE 48

DIFFERENCES

Among the

DISSENTERS

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EXETER

Relating to the DOCTRINE of the

Ever Blessed Trinity,

So far as gave CONCERN to some

LONDON MINISTERS.

L O N D O N:

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A PLAIN and FAITHFUL

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THE happy Agreement that so long continued among Protestant Dissenters of the Three Denominations in City and Country, hath afforded Matter of pleasing Reflection and Thankfulness to God.

IT must therefore very sensibly afflict us to perceive any thing arising, that might threaten an Interruption to so great a Blessing, but especially from Differences about the most important Points of the *common Faith* of Christians ; which

first became the unhappy Case of those at *Exeter*, but in their Progress and Consequences (as is too well known) have affected us in this City, and oblige us now to lay before the World a just and faithful Account of these Matters, as carefully taken from Originals.

IN the Month of *August*, 1718. Letters were receiv'd from some eminent Ministers near *Exeter*, complaining in the most moving Terms of the Revival and Growth of the *Arian* Notions, and lamenting the Defection of some of the younger Ministers into those Errors. It was signify'd that after they had read several late Books, according to the *New Scheme*, they promoted their Errors first in private for some Time; that they had been too much countenanc'd by Others more considerable (who 'twas hoped were not come in to that Scheme themselves) and particularly by some of the *Exeter* Ministers; that at a Meeting of Ministers it was considered what Measures were fit to be taken to put a Stop to those Errors: And that *then* they agreed to be silent and patient, hoping, that by private and tender Perswasion, those that were gone out of the Way of Truth, might be reduced; but they found that *that* Candor and Tendernefs had been greatly abused, and that these Men took Encouragement from it, to go about the Country to propagate their Notions with great Zeal and Confidence; telling the People that the *Ministers* were of their Mind,

Mind, no Body oppos'd them, this Age was more refin'd, this Scheme carried in it generous and noble Principles : As if it would be the Glory of *Non-Conformity* to end in *Arianism*. They gave it out that a great, if not the greater Part of the *LONDON Ministers* had given into the same Opinion and would in a little Time declare themselves.

It was further signify'd, with the utmost Concern, that by these Means some of the Younger and Meaner of the People had taken the Liberty to treat some Parts of the *Holy Scriptures* very irreverently ; that there was a very visible Decay of serious and practical Religion ; and it was found that the *Arian* Error had spread farther than was imagin'd. Laymen now talk'd and disputed about it in many Odious and Blasphemous Phrases, several of which are too shocking and scandalous to be mention'd. It was observ'd, that they had all the Arguments put into their Mouths, as must necessarily come from Men of Learning : A dying Person that was a Member of the *Church of England*, sent for one of the Dissenting Ministers of *Exon* in Horror having been misled into these Notions.

NAY, some *Ministers* did see fit no longer to conceal themselves. One was so bold as to say, That *Himself* was an *Arian*, and hoped *Arianism* would be as extensive as the *Gospel*. Another, That he never did, nor ever would believe our *Trinity in Unity*. A Minister at *Exeter* preaching on 1 *Jo.* v. 7. a great
Out-

Outcrie was made against that Text. One said to a Neighbour of his, that he had preach'd on a Place that was not Scripture. A few Days after this, a poor Woman came to that Minister and express'd great Concern and Sorrow, and said she knew not how to come to the Lord's Table, for they told her that *Christ was not God*, and that the text he preach'd upon *was not in the Bible*: And a Minister said, *That upon reading Dr. Clark he had given it up*. Soon after this the controversy began to open, and one or more began to make Profelytes with this Motive, that the Majority of the Ministers were of their mind. One that had declar'd he was an *Arian*, was Ordain'd in *Somerset* near *Bath*, upon a Testimonial from three Ministers in *Exon*, who fear'd he could not have his Ordination by consent of the *Assembly* there. Many young Candidates were found to come forth from their Academical Studies with this Taint upon them; and others deceived those that Ordain'd them, appearing to be of these Notions soon after. Catechizing had been left off for several Years in some Congregations, and Children had been taught to say, *they would not for the World repeat the Sixth Answer about the Trinity*, and many loose and unsteddy People had been secretly practic'd upon in several Towns, as well as *Exeter*. A Minister complain'd that in a Town where he labours, Two eminent Members of his Congregation were carried away to *Arianism*, and he fear'd one of them to *Deism*.

THIS great and awful Doctrine was become
the

the common Subject of Discourse and Dispute in Conversation, and some of the Dissenters had been taxed even in the publick Market by those of the establish'd Way, with denying *their Church* first, and *their Saviour* afterwards. Judge Price had spent most of his Charge at the *Exeter* Assizes against those Errors, and own'd they had their Rise from some Authors in the *Church of England*. An Arch-Deacon of *Barnstable* openly charg'd one of the *Exeter* Ministers with Arianism in his speech to the Clergy, and told them that most of that Ministers Congregation were turned Arians. And the *Exeter* Clergy warned their People from their Pulpits, to have nothing to do with the Dissenters, since they now came to *deny the Lord that bought them*, and *made the Press to sweat with their Blasphemies*. The *Baptists* had dismissed their Minister upon this Account, at whose House some of the young Men and Candidates for the Ministry used to assemble, as was suppos'd, to confer upon this Subject. All these things were related as true Matters of Fact and we were refer'd to several worthy Brethren in the Country and to the *Citizens of Exeter* for a Confirmation of them.

THIS sad State of things caus'd a great Uneasiness in abundance of serious People, so that the principal Members of the several united Congregations meeting together, thought proper to depute some of their Number to signify it as their joint Request to all their Ministers, that they

they would preach against these Errors. But what was done by *some* of them in Answer hereto, was so far from being satisfactory, that it increas'd their Suspicions ; for instead of a clear open and strenuous Opposition, they were so slight in their Discourses upon these Points, and delivered themselves in such ambiguous Terms as gave ground to apprehend they were Friends and not Enemies to the Errors that were complain'd of. It was a Matter of further Grief and Complaint that one of those Ministers had alter'd his *Doxology* at the End of his Prayers. Another, *viz.* Mr. *Peirce*, would never give glory to the Holy Spirit at all. And when he preach'd, had not for several Months suffer'd the People to sing (as was usual in the close of the *Psalm*, to the Glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; but tho' such a strenuous Asserter of the Rights of the People, yet Himself debarr'd them the Liberty of giving Glory to that Person in the Godhead, whom they thought they were oblig'd by their Baptism to give Glory to ; and this he did by Direction given in *Writing* to the Clerk in the Face of the Congregation.

IN this melancholy Posture of Affairs, some made their Complaints to the Neighbouring Ministers and earnestly intreated *them* to appear against these dangerous Evils ; who, tho' they deeply lamented them, yet out of their great Respect and Tenderness to the *Exeter* Ministers,
and

and from a Desire if possible to put a Stop to them in a private Way, were very loth to step forth in a publick Manner against them; till at last being not only exceedingly press'd, but sharply reprov'd as too remiss in such a Juncture, and observing to their great Grief, how these Errors gain'd Ground apace by *forbearance*, they found themselves under the unhappy Necessity of breaking Silence, and oblig'd in Conscience to appear openly against them,

HOWEVER that they might do all Things with Christian Deliberation and Care, they resolv'd first to consult their *Brethren* in other Counties and Cities, and if they should concur with them in Opinion, they would at their next *Assembly* of Ministers make a publick Declaration against such dangerous Tenets, and those that hold and propagate them.

ACCORDINGLY these Matters were communicated to the Ministers in the Neighbouring Country, and several Letters were sent to L O N D O N, giving an Account of their Circumstances, and desiring Advice before the Meeting of the *Assembly*. The first of these Letters (tho' directed to a private Brother, craving his Counsel in these Circumstances for the Direction of the Person that wrote it) was thought to have Matters in it of such an uncommon Nature, and weighty Importance (besides the Mention it made of Reports that the L O N D O N Ministers favour'd

these Notions) as made it highly expedient, and even necessary to impart the Contents of it to others. Whereupon several Ministers were desired to give a Meeting at *Saliers-Hall*, and bring what others with them they met with, and accordingly a considerable Number of them came together, when the Letter was produc'd and read to them once and again; and it was agreed that the Reverend Mr. *Tong* and Mr. *Foxon* should draw up an Answer to it, and that on such a Day there should be a more general Meeting to consider of that Letter, and determine what should be done with it. Notice was given to the Ministers of the three Denominations, and there were some of each Sort on the Day appointed. Mr. *Tong* at Mr. *Foxon's* Request undertook to pen the Draught of it, and having shewn it to Mr. *Foxon* before the Meeting, he was pleased to declare his Approbation of it. The Letter was as follows.

To the Reverend Mr. WALROND, &c.

Reverend and Honour'd S I R,

W H E N I had seriously weigh'd the Contents of your Letter, with which I am favour'd they appear'd to me to be of that Nature and Importance, as to deserve and even require the Perusal of the Body of our Brethren here,

W^r

(III)

WE have met more than once about this Matter, and I am allow'd by them to assure you that we are very sensibly affected with the Account you give us of the revival and spreading of such *dangerous Errors* as are there mention'd in your Parts of *England*, which have been distinguished by so many Eminently Learned, and Godly Ministers, and so many exemplary Christians, who have not only been strict Professors of the purer Christianity, but faithful Confessors for it.

WE cannot say we have no Apprehension of the breaking forth of the like Errors here, but we know of none among us, hitherto that have *openly* avowed them, and of but very *Few* that own themselves to be in Doubt and Suspence about them.

WE cannot think ourselves competent to give advice to so judicious and numerous an *Assembly* as yours is known to be ; especially since we take it for granted, the Methods proper to be observ'd, will naturally arise from Facts and Circumstances that can only appear to those that are upon the Spot.

BUT the *general* Rules by which we think we ought to govern ourselves, if ever we should be called to that ungrateful Task, are such as these.

I. NOT to suspect any among us to be infected with these Errors, unless we have good

Ground for it, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. *Charity thinketh no Evil.*

2. NOT to be harsh or hasty with those that are doubtful and wavering, but to give them Time and what Assistance we can for their better Information and Establishment, 2 Tim. ii. 5. *Gentle to all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, &c.*

3. YET to represent to them faithfully and seriously the great Danger of denying the proper Godhead of *Christ* and of the *Holy Ghost*, and the malignant Influence it must have into the very Vitals of the Christian State and Worship. *Error will eat as a Canker*, 2 Tim. ii. 17.

4. To let them plainly know, that we cannot without sinning against our Consciences recommend any to the Office of the Ministry by Ordination, or any other solemn Act of ours, who are known to maintain so great an Error, 1 Tim. v. 22. *Lay Hands suddenly on no Man, neither be thou Partaker of other Mens Sins; keep thyself pure.*

5. THAT if any already in the Ministry shall fall into that pernicious Error, and persist in it, and teach Men so, it will become our Duty, as we have Opportunity, to warn People of them, Prov. xix. 27. *Cease, my Son, to hear the Instruction that causeth to err from the Way of Understanding.*

If these Rules meet with your Approbation, we shall rejoice in it, and hope our *Harmony* herein may be of good Service to the Interests of Truth
and

and Peace; if in any Thing they appear to be deficient or redundant, we shall gladly receive your Observations upon them, and earnestly pray that the *Allwise God* will graciously meet your venerable *Assembly*, and direct all your Consultations to his Glory.

W. TONG.

This Letter was also signed by Mr. Robinson as Moderator, August 25. 1718. at Salters-Hall, by the unanimous Consent of those that were present, he subjoining the following Lines,

POSTSCRIPT.

Worthy Dear SIR,

IT was with great Reluctancy, that I went into the Chair upon so great an Occasion: But I did with a great deal of Pleasure receive the Direction of the *Brethren* to assure you, that the Letter our *Worthy Brother* has wrote to you above, was communicated to us; and does now come to you as our *unanimous* and *agreed Sense*. In the midst of all our Fear I cannot but look upon this as an happy Presage, that *so many Brethren* as were together upon this Occasion, broke up with so cool, so christian, and truly Catholick a Temper, as did appear among us. The good Lord direct both you and us at once into the Way of Truth,
and

and the Way that may effectually preserve the
Peace of his Church in our Day. I am

Reverend and Dear SIR,

Your very affectionate Servant

And Brother,

B. ROBINSON.

Ministers present.

Mr. Benjamin Robinson, Moderator.

Mr. Lorimer,
Mr. Jer. Smith,
Mr. Foxon,
Mr. Nesbitt,
Mr. Tong,
Mr. Afty,
Mr. Bradbury,
Mr. Lewis,
Mr. Mitchel,
Mr. Brown,
Mr. Hunt,
Mr. Ridgley,

Mr. Bennet,
Mr. Hill,
Mr. Wood,
Mr. Cumming,
Mr. Davy,
Mr. Maquare,
Mr. Beaumont,
Mr. Loyd,
Mr. Hartley,
Mr. Sladen,
Mr. Anderson,
Mr. Gowen.

In all twenty five; not one of them oppos'd
sending the Letter.

PROCEEDINGS

PROCEEDINGS of the *Assembly* at EXETER.

THE Dissenting Ministers in the *Western Parts* of *England* are us'd to assemble twice in the Year, in order to understand the State of their Congregations, and the better to concert Measures for furthering the great Ends of Religion and their Ministry.

AT their Meeting, which was on the 9th, 10th, and 11th of *September* last 1718, this Matter was open'd; and a Debate arose about these *grand Points*. Those who inclined to favour the *New Scheme* were very averse to have it touch'd by any *Assembly* at all, and much Struggle there was against it; and there were some, who out of a strange Fondness for an unlimited Liberty of Opinion, (as if the *Assembly* must never meddle with Matters of Doctrine) joined with them.

AFTER a long and warm Debate it was agreed to make a *Declaration of Faith*, every one in his own Words, *vivâ voce*. Several deliver'd their Confessions entirely in *Scripture-Terms*, without declaring their Sense and Constructions of them. Others, and those the *most*, freely declar'd their Sentiments in their *own Terms*. After which it was moved, that the general Sense of the Confessions there made, appear'd to amount to this Article: *That there is but One Living and True GOD, and that the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost are that One GOD*. This, after much Struggle, was put to the Vote again, and was carried to be the collected Sense of a great Majority, and accordingly was enter'd as a *Minute*.

AFTER

AFTER this, two Sermons were preach'd, one on the *Wednesday* before the *Assembly*, the other on the *Morning* following, according to Custom, upon which follow'd a great Ferment in the City. It was observ'd, that all the Elder Ministers to a very few, were zealous in their Votes and Speeches for the *Common Faith*; so that the Weight, as well as Number, went that Way. Most of the graver Ministers agreed, that in Conscience they could delay no longer giving their Testimony against these growing Errors, and were afraid they had neglected it too long; for they that favour'd the new Opinion were bolder than was imagin'd they would have been, to the Astonishment of the rest: And it was found that many, too many of the young Men had been carried away.

Soon after this, several Pamphlets came out abetting the new Error. Such as the *Innocent vindicated*, in which are several very bold and dangerous Assertions. As *Pag. 5.* The Lord Jesus is the Chief of all subordinate Powers and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, and above the greatest Angels; *Yet even in the highest Character, and most exalted Description of our Saviour, of his Honour, Kingdom, and Dignity, 'tis always represented as derived from, and granted by GOD the Father.* *Pag. 6.* Tho' GOD made the Worlds by him, He has yet a GOD above him. *Pag. 7.* He never propos'd himself equal to his Father, *ibid.* I and my Father are One. 'Tis a Mistake to interpret this, One in Substance

stance equal in Power and Glory. Pag. 8. There are Three that bear Record, &c. This is meant only of a Oneness in Testimony. Pag. 9. Sometimes they readily allow but One GOD, and in the same Breath deny it by asserting three Persons in the Godhead. This Book was very industriously spread about the County, and sent into others, and propagated all the Ways possible, by thrusting them under Shop-Doors in the Night, where they could not be admitted by Day, to poyson young Apprentices and Servants ; clapt into poor ignorant People's Hands in the Market, and inclos'd in Letters far and near.

ANOTHER was printed in LONDON by way of Letter to a Dissenter at Exeter ; the Whole of which is upon Anti-Trinitarian Principles, and as a Taste of which, we shall only cite the following Passages from Pag. 15. where he makes the Condescension of WORD whom he styles the Power and Wisdom of GOD to lie in his, *being divested of these Perfections for a Time, and in putting himself into the Condition of poor mortal Men, wherein he was to learn and increase in Wisdom as they do, and wherein he himself who made the Worlds should have no Power to do any Thing, and should need the Spirit of God to work his Miracles, and the Assistance of Angels to comfort him. And Pag. 21. He says, that the Scriptures evidently lead us to distinguish his Godhead from that of the Father.*

ANOTHER in Answer to the Rev. Mr. Trosse's Arguments, where are many shocking Expressions not fit to be transcrib'd. The Author says: 'Tis by Christ as the Medium and *Instrument* only, that all Things are form'd under GOD. He denies in a blasphemous Manner, the infinite Perfections of GOD to belong to Christ, and utterly renounces the *proper Deity* of the Holy Ghost. [This is the Author that appear'd to Mr. Eveleigh to have no Reverence for the Scriptures, and Mr. Pierce in his Answer to Mr. Eveleigh, *that it will be time enough for him to suppose he had no Reputation to lose, when any of his own Works shall have prov'd him capable of writing as good Sense as that Answer contains.*]

THE opposite Party appear'd now in open War against the Truth, and laid aside all Shyness and Modesty in their Opposition, striving with all their Might to push their new Scheme as far as it would go, the suspected Ministers all this while keeping Silence, or at least refraining to make such an open Opposition to these Practices, as their People had Reason to expect. These Things could not but further alarm and increase the Concern of serious Persons there.

IN these Circumstances there was a Meeting of the four Ministers with those Citizens, who are the chief that manage the Concerns of the United Congregations, where there was a warm Dispute, but no Satisfaction given. Mr. Pierce being ask'd
about

about the Assembly's Catechism, he wav'd teaching it to the Children; own'd the *Subordination* of the Son to the Father; vehemently urg'd against the *Doxologies* used, and ask'd where they found in Scripture, that the *Holy Ghost* was call'd GOD, or *Glory* ascribed to him? And therefore desir'd to be excus'd from it. Mr. *Lavington* having said to Mr. *Pierce*, that if the highest Nature of Christ was included under the Term *Son*, and not the Term *Father* in 1 Cor. xv. 24. that then he must make such a GOD of *Christ*, as after the Day of Judgment must put down all Rule, Authority, and Power, to which Mr. *Pierce* reply'd, he could not help it if Scripture made him so. When they were ask'd about the *Arian* Pamphlet lately publish'd, wherein the Holy Trinity was declar'd *inconsistent* and a *Contradiction*; they reply'd, they had not read it. When they were told how much the Sentiments of the LONDON Ministers differ'd from theirs in this Article Mr. *Hallet* reply'd, *not all the LONDON Ministers.*

ABOUT this Time a Minister in the Neighbourhood, who had been useful there for Ten Years; but was now obstinate in this Error, was very unanimously discharg'd by his Congregation. He told his People at Parting, that if they depended upon the Bible as it was now translated, they would build upon a *Sandy* Foundation, and that

he taught the Assemblies Catechism these two Years past *against his Conscience.*

MATTERS being at this Pass, the Minds of serious People were fill'd with great Perplexity, neither knew they what to do under such a difficult Juncture, but thought proper at length to send the following Letter directed to Mr. *Benjamin Robinson*, Mr. *Tong*, Mr. *Reynolds*, Mr. *Smith*, Dr. *Calamy*, and the Rest of the *Brethren*, who address'd the Letter for the Assembly at EXETER the 26th of *August* last,

EXON, Nov. 22. 1718.

Reverend Sirs,

WE thankfully own the Concern and Readiness our Neighbouring Ministers have shewn for us, in representing to you the Danger our common Faith has been expos'd to by the secret Methods that have been carried on in this City and Neighbourhood, to propagate the *Arian* Notions: As also your kind Letter in Answer, sympathizing with us under such heavy Circumstances.

WE had great Hopes, that the prudent and seasonable Declaration of our *Assembly*, held in this City in *September* last, would have put a Stop to

to their Growth, and quieted the Minds of those Laymen, who had been drawn in with too much Warmth and Zeal to pass those Sentiments upon their Neighbours; but with great Sorrow of Heart we daily see the bold Advances these Notions make, and that they eat like a Canker.

WE have with due Respects earnestly pray'd our Ministers, that they would appear in the Breach by their publick declaring in Concurrence with our Assembly the Profession of their Faith in the TRINITY, endeavour to put a Stop to those dangerous Opinions as we conceive them to be, we requested them either to declare in the Sense of the said Assembly, *viz. That there is but one GOD, and that the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, are that GOD;* or in the Words of the *Westminster Assembly* of Divines, in Answer to the *Sixth* Question of the lesser Catechism, which they commonly taught; Or in the Words of the *First Article* of the *Church of England*, concerning the *Trinity*, which they had already signed to and approved of: But we had no Satisfaction to either of the said Proposals from *three* of our *four* Ministers; but instead thereof one of them expressly declared for a *Subordination*.

OUR Societies here, who formerly enjoy'd an agreeable Harmony in the Profession of their Faith, are now thrown into the utmost Distraction and Perplexity: Nor know we what Steps
to

to take. Desirous we are to contribute all that lies in our Power to preserve the Peace of the *Church*, so far as the Truth of the Gospel may be maintain'd; but it would be grievous to us, if so great and necessary a Point of Faith should suffer by our being wanting to our Duty.

THEREFORE *Rev. Sirs*, since you have so readily and kindly, already interested yourselves in this weighty Affair, by communicating your Sentiments to the *Ministers*; so we with all Humility request you will advise what becomes us as private Christians to do, and how we ought to behave our selves in so critical a Juncture. We desire to carry it with the utmost Respect and Deference as hitherto we have done to our *Ministers*, and look upon it as a very great Affliction on us, that we are necessitated to make this Address to you on this sad Occasion.

THE Favour of your Answer, would greatly oblige us the *Committee*, who have the Care of the Collections for our four united Ministers, who unanimously Subscribe this, and are

Reverend Sirs,

Your Obliged and Obedient Servants.

Who were

Mr. James White,
Mr. Samuel Munckly,

Mr. Benjamin Brinley,
Mr. Francis Lydston,

Mr. Henry

Mr. *Anthony Vicary,*
 Mr. *John Stephens,*
 Mr. *Edmond Cock,*
 Mr. *Mark Burridg.*

Mr. *Henry Walrond,*
 Mr. *Thomas Jeffery.*
 Mr. *John Vowler,*
 Mr. *John Pym;*

AFTER this Letter, they repeated their Request, and earnestly press'd for an Answer, expressing their Wonder and Concern they had receiv'd none, being grieved at our Backwardness. Some of the *Brethren* to whom this Letter was particularly directed, had at various Times Discourses about this Matter, and found it attended with no small Difficulties. One of them signify'd to a Worthy Minister in that Neighbourhood, that it would be extreamly difficult for us to intermeddle in this Affair. [We could not be thought to be competent Judges of the Grounds of the Peoples Dissatisfaction. If they were only Negative not Positive, it would look very hard. We could not speak from our own Knowledge. We could not expect the Ministers concern'd, should admit of our Arbitration, or would give us any Account of their Sentiments. Surely this would lie before the Assembly at its next Meeting in those Parts.] To this it was return'd that they in the Country were not a little concern'd to find by that Brother's Letter, that we were loth to interpose in their Affair, and that we seem'd to refer them to their next Assembly. *But alas!* they were in Danger of being broken and undone before
 that

that Day come, and ARIUS got Ground there every Day. And it was fear'd that if we should hush this matter up in Silence, it would give very great Encouragement to this growing Sect, and if nothing were done, the other Side would be much discourag'd who are an excellent Sett of People. Thus they became importunate like Persons in Distress, and by repeated Letters from one and another, they call'd upon us for Help.

DURING this Time the five Ministers to whom the Letter above from the *Exeter* Gentlemen was directed by Name, were prevented meeting all together for some Weeks, through the Indisposition of one of them, and thereby hinder'd from coming to a joint and determinate Resolution. But upon the continued and pressing Importunity of the People and that Brothers Recovery, they all met and agreed upon the following Answer directed to Mr. *Vowler*.

London, Jan. 6th, 1718-19.

Gentlemen,

THE delay there has been in your unhappy Affair at *Exeter*, has not proceeded from any Want of due Concern for you, or for the Support and Interest of what we, as well as you, look upon to be the common Faith at first delivered to the Saints: But one of us who writes this,

this, has through the whole Month of *December* been disabled to meet his Brethren, or so much as to go into his own Pulpit.

AND now we are All together, we are greatly at a loss, the Case being what never once was brought before us till now. We are apprehensive what sort of Reflections will be thrown upon us, if we should interpose with our Advices, where a Number of Ministers almost equal to ours is concern'd: Besides, that we are at so great a Distance, and that you are ere long to have a numerous Assembly of Ministers (that are your Neighbours) and Consequently much more fit to enter into this Affair than we.

IT has always been thought fit, that where there are misunderstandings between Ministers and People, neighbouring Ministers should have the first Hearing of the Case, and use their utmost Endeavours to bring it to the most desirable Issue: And it is not thought Proper, that we should interpose, at least till we see it further necessary.

WE beg, *Gentlemen*, this may not by any be interpreted as if we hereby were deserting the Cause of our common Christianity, or would discourage you from appearing for it. We are only afraid to go beyond the Bounds of Order, or do, what by breaking through agreed Rules

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may

may do hurt instead of doing good. We are
with great Respect,

Gentlemen,

Your very affectionate Faithful Servants.

Edm. Calamy,
Jere. Smith,
William Tong.

B. Robinson,
Tho. Reynolds,

ABOUT the same Time also we were informed both by Letters and personal Application of the miserable Condition and sad Perplexity, to which the Congregations of *Exeter* were reduc'd, how much they needed Advice, and how earnestly they desir'd it from those Ministers to whom they had address'd their Letter. This was represented in moving Terms, and not without some mixtures of *Complaint* against us. To all which it was reply'd, that after the *Brethren* in the Country had done what was fit to be done first on their Part; it was to be hop'd we should not be wanting in any Thing that would then appear to be our Duty, or if we were, *that* might then expose us to their Blame.

SOON after this we understood, that the Gentlemen apply'd themselves to some of the Elder Ministers in their Neighbourhood to the Number of seven, who upon their Desire met in that City, and after earnest Prayer to GOD, and hearing

ing what they had to say in Relation to their Ministers, they took several Hours Consideration and Debate to come to the Three Resolutions underneath, and which they did not think fit to deliver presently to the Gentlemen, but desir'd they might have a Fortnights Time allow'd them to send to L O N D O N, and other Ministers in S. mer set, as likewise to several of their own County. Accordingly they wrote to us, praying that the five Brethren who subscrib'd the Letter that was sent to the Gentlemen, the Committee, for managing the Concerns of the united Congregations at Exeter, would together with any other they saw fit, give their Opinion concerning these Propositions and Subscribe them if they were approv'd, and if not to acquaint them with their mistakes. Which were as follow.

1. *T H A T* there are some Errors in Doctrine which are a sufficient Ground for the People to withdraw from their Ministers holding such Errors.

2. *T H A T* the denying the true and proper Divinity of the Son of G O D, viz. That he is one G O D with the Father, is an Error of that Nature; contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and common Faith of the reformed Churches.

3. *T H A T* when so dangerous an Error is industriously propagated, to the overthrowing of the Faith of many, we think it the indispensable Duty of Ministers, who are set for the Defence of

the Gospel, earnestly to withstand it ; and to give reasonable Satisfaction to their People of their Soundness in the Faith. And we likewise recommend to the People, as their Duty ; to hold fast the Truth in Love ; avoiding Anger, Clamour, and Evil speaking, and to behave themselves with all Sincerity and Meekness as becometh Christians.

To these it was desir'd, that if we did not think fit to Subscribe, we would signify our Consent with them. Accordingly one of the five Brethren signify'd by Letter our hearty Approbation of these *three Propositions*. However, advising to proceed cautiously: and give Time to the Brethren to consider and alter their Notions. By way of Return to this, they let us know again, that they spent Hours and Days, before they came to fix in the three Propositions, and hop'd they should ever proceed with the like Deliberation. That their Hearts were ready to break under the Necessity of what they had done. And after all that they must leave it to the People to make the Application ; and purposed to exhort them, to proceed with the greatest Temper, Caution and Deliberation. Nothing was done till a Month after this, and then the *seven* Ministers only deliver'd in the three Propositions to the *thirteen* Gentlemen, leaving it to them to proceed with their own Ministers. It was further signify'd that Mr. Peirce, had been very plain

plain in declaring to the 13 Gentlemen for the *Subordination* or Inferiority of Christ to the Father, disputing much upon the Subject with a Minister in their Presence to their great Dissatisfaction. And he will never give Glory to the Holy Spirit, or suffer the People to do it, when he preaches : That they should meet again very soon at *Exeter*, and then would be sure to take the Advice given into their deepest and calmest Consideration. But we could scarce be sensible how *uneasy* the People were, and *afraid* to come to the Communion, and had no *Satisfaction* in their publick Worship. And all the numerous Congregations around that City were in great Danger. And young Ministers and giddy People were ready to run into these Errors under the shadow of those Elder Ministers. They profess'd themselves loth, very loth to part with them, and therefore they try'd their utmost Skill with them in private ; but on the other Hand they were loth to have their People poison'd at the *very Root* of their Christianity, and their Faith made void.

WHILST Matters were in this Agitation, Some *Gentlemen* of LONDON, brought in a Paper of Advices to the *Committee* of the three Denominations. The Account of which, and the Proceedings afterwards at *Salter's Hall*, will be the Subject of the *Second Part* of this Narrative.

WHAT

WHAT we have thus far publish'd, we hope will *satisfy* the World, at least the impartial and sober Part of Mankind, that the *Ministers* in the *Country* have been far from acting a rash Part in this *Affair*; and that we in *London* have not *animated* and *exasperated* our *Brethren* there, nor acted by any such *Concert* with them as some have *groundlessly* suggested, nor push'd Things on to those *Extremities* they have come to, which is an *Aspersion*, that has been but too industriously, tho' very wrongfully, cast upon us; and this may (for the present at least) suffice for an Answer to a very *extraordinary* Question, in the *Reply to the subscribing Ministers Reasons*, &c. pag. 10.

N.B. SOME of the *blasphemous Expressions* referr'd to in pag. 5. were such as these. One was heard to say, *That Christ was a GOD, and so was King GEORGE*. Another, *That the Holy Ghost was not GOD at all*; besides, other *Blasphemies* daily broach'd in common Conversation, with yet *more gross Expressions*, not fit to be inserted.



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WHEREAS some by Mistake have judg'd, that the *Book* entitled, *The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated and defended*, was compos'd and publish'd with a Special Reference to the late unhappy Differences at *Salters-Hall*, and the same is not only insinuated in divers Passages of a printed Letter directed to us by a *Lay-Gentleman*, particularly in *p. 1. l. 11.* and *p. 50 to 56, &c.* But strongly charg'd in the *Postscript* to the Letter to Mr *Robinson*. We take this Opportunity to signify, that the said *Book* was compos'd without any Relation to that melancholy Affair, and gone far in the *Press* before the very first Meeting at *Salters-Hill* about that Matter: Yet would we not by this be understood in the least to disapprove the Part we afterwards had in *subscribing*, upon so just a Call, the *Scripture-Doctrine*, we have endeavour'd to defend.

W. Tong,
Benj. Robinson,
Jer. Smith,
Tho. Reynolds.

There

There is a Discourse of the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity by the Rev. Mr. Eveliegh, of which the second Edition is going to the Press, and which 'tis judg'd will give the Impartial Reader, different Apprehensions of the Abilities of that Worthy Minister, from what Mr. Peirce has endeavour'd to convey.



F I N I S.

ERRATA.

PAG. 17. Lin. 6. for the, read this; and Lin. 19. after of, read the Pag. 18. after Mr. Peirce add says. Pa. 22. after Obedient Servant, read who were.